

## Fitting in Fitness: How to Work Exercise into your Day

With 1,440 minutes in each day, it shouldn't be that hard to find 30 minutes a day for moderate physical activity, as most doctors recommend. But it can be. Modern life is fast paced. For many people, days are a blur of work, household chores, errands, time with family and friends and, of course, sleep. With everything going on, finding those 30 minutes a day for exercise can be a challenge.

Still, even people with the busiest schedules can find room for fitness. The key is to make it as convenient as possible for your particular lifestyle.



### Exercise in the comfort of your home

Time spent at home doesn't have to be "couch potato" time. Try these tips to fit more physical activity into your home life:

**Wake up early.** Try getting up 30 minutes earlier than you normally do and use the extra time to walk on your treadmill or take a brisk walk around the neighborhood. Some research suggests that people who exercise in the morning are more likely than are others to stick with it over the long term. If you're too stiff in the morning, however, wait to exercise until later in the day.

**Make household chores count.** Mop the floor, scrub the bathtub or do other housework. The stretching and lifting are good exercise. Work at a fast pace to get your heart pumping. Also, try working in the garden, doing yard work or mowing the lawn. Gardening can burn up to 300 calories an hour and is a great way to build strength. Raking and hoeing strengthen your arms and back, while digging works your arms and legs.

**De-stress with a quick walk after work.** Exercising before dinner may also suppress your appetite, helping to reduce your total daily calorie intake.

**Get your dog into the act.** Take two quick walks with Fido or Fluffy every day. It's best to build up to about 30 minutes of continuous activity. But two 15-minute jaunts are nearly as good.

**Exercise while watching TV.** Use hand weights, ride a stationary bike or do a stretching routine. Get up off the couch to change the channel on the TV. Or keep the telephone in another room so that you have to walk to answer it.

**Make family time exercise time.** Take group walks after dinner or schedule a family game of kickball for Saturday mornings. Wait about an hour after you eat before exercising, however.

## Make it an escape

Some people enjoy the privacy of exercising at home and can work it into their home life fairly easily. For others, though, being at home is too much of a distraction. If you prefer to exercise away from home, you might:

**Be social.** You may enjoy exercise as a social activity and do better with the encouragement of others. Dance clubs, hiking groups, health clubs and park and recreation activities are examples.

**Join a team.** Try a softball, soccer or volleyball team at your company or through your local parks and recreation department. Making a commitment to a team is a great motivator.

**Join a fitness club near your job.** Sign up for a group exercise class that meets immediately before or after work. You'll meet other people and avoid the stress of driving in rush-hour traffic. Plus, the cost may be an extra incentive to stick with the program.

**Plan active outings with friends and family.** That way, you can have fun together and still get some exercise. Make a date with a friend to hike in a local park, or take a family trip to the zoo.

**Exercise while running errands.** When you go to the mall or grocery store, park toward the back of the lot and walk the extra distance. If you have a little extra time, walk inside for a lap or two before you start shopping. Keep a pair of walking shoes in your car so that you're ready when you find a few minutes for exercise.

## Work out at work

To fit in more physical activity while you're on the job:

**Make the most of your commuting time.** Walk or bike to work. If you ride the bus to and from work, get off a few blocks early and walk the rest of the way.

**Take the stairs whenever you can.** If you have a meeting on the 14th floor, get off the elevator a few floors early and use the stairs.

**Take fitness breaks instead of coffee breaks.** Spend the time taking a 15-minute walk.

**Start a lunchtime walking group with your co-workers.** The regular routine and the support of your co-workers may help you stick with the program.

**Schedule exercise as you would any other appointment.** Don't change your exercise plans if something else comes along — remind yourself that exercise is just as important.

**If you have to travel for work, pack and plan so that you can maintain your exercise routine.** Bring your jump-rope or choose a hotel that has fitness facilities. If you're stuck in an airport waiting for a plane, grab your carry-on and take a walk.

*-Mayo Clinic*